

Around Town with the Town Manager #1

A number of people have suggested that I write a weekly column in this paper to report my thoughts on happenings in Town so residents will understand what municipal government is doing.

There is one problem: I'm not a writer and I'm a private person. With that caveat, over the course of the next several weeks, I will write to you about our efforts over here at Town Hall. I hope to talk about the Evergreen Report, or "how to do the same work with less people." I will write about "Tax Incremental Financing," or how to anticipate school tax revenue to fund sewers, water storage units, and highway improvements." I'll write about how the Select Board and town employees determine what is needed, versus what is wanted, for Colchester. I also hope that you will get in touch with me and tell me of problems and issues which you'd like me to illuminate.

Let's begin with who I am. I'm the oldest town employee. As people my age know, being a "senior" has its drawbacks. Long ago, I was raised in a Calvinistic home colored by Victorian parents and grandmothers. In other words, I prefer work and don't understand hugging. In spite of this upbringing, I managed to gain a libertarian streak that gives me compassion for those who oppose government regulations and authority which is counterweighed by a strong sense of following the Golden Rule. In other words, I am – like most people – a mix of personality characteristics that are not always predictable or logical.

As Town Manager, I believe in appealing to younger people because the future is theirs – yours – and not mine. In my book, a town manager is the "guardian of the future," the person who reminds us that we need to consider the needs of tomorrow when making decisions in and for the present. Those of us who are "seniors" need to develop the skills to see beyond our graves. I've been told by people not yet eligible to "senior" status that, in order to communicate with non-seniors, I need to go beyond writing for a newspaper and learn to use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the Cloud. Although I am not sure I will ever learn the acronyms for Twitter, I will try to initiate myself into this "new world" by posting this column on Facebook. If I master that, maybe I'll try YouTube.

Everything I decide today will affect tomorrow, and thus decisions today are complex, challenging, and at times worrisome, for me. My columns will constantly bring this to your attention. My characterization of issues will probably anger some people, and I welcome a reactionary dialogue about current issues and their impact on the future of people living in Colchester. I hope this column will bring facts to the forefront of community discussions so you can make decisions less about taxes and more about what you want to leave to your children and grandchildren.

You can reach me by phone at 264-5501 or by e-mail at avoegele@colchestervt.gov

Al Voegele

